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STUTTERING MOSE:

or, THE OLD SCOUT OF
THE REVOLUTION.

By GEN. J. L. JOHNSTON.



"Put him in—drown him!" roared the sergeant, rushing up and dealing him a blow on the forehead with his clenched fist. Mose's head flew back as if from the blow; but his feet shot out like piston rods and landed on the sergeant's stomach, doubling him up like a jack-knife, and sending him to grass most ignominiously.

STUTTERING MOSE;

OR,

THE OLD SCOUT OF THE REVOLUTION.

By GENERAL J. L. JOHNSTON.

Author of "Old Trump," "89," "Snowed In," Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUEER OLD PEDLER.

WHILE the British were in possession of New York City, in the dark days of the American Revolution, the patriots had many faithful scouts who frequently passed the lines in search of information. It was a very dangerous thing to do, as the rules of war condemned them, when captured inside the lines, to suffer death as spies. Yet many not only crossed the lines and entered the city, but freely mingled with the soldiers, hung around the head-quarters, chaffed the officers, and slyly gathered information which they speedily conveyed to the patriots in waiting to receive it.

Some times one would be either recognized or betrayed, and then certain capture and death would be the result. Gallant Captain Nathan Hale, of Connecticut, was thus unfortunate—was condemned as a spy, and met death bravely, saying:

"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

Death had but few terrors for these daring patriots. Their readiness to meet it in defense of their country astonished and puzzled the British officers.

Among the most faithful and daring of the Revolutionary scouts was Moses Caruthers, known among the patriots of that day as Stuttering Mose. He was a man past the meridian of life at the breaking out of the war, his hair being liberally sprinkled with grey, and crow's feet numerous at the corners of his eyes.

The war found him quietly pursuing the double occupation of a farmer and pedler. In the spring, summer and fall, he would work on his farm near Stamford with untiring industry. But when the ice, and snow, and the cold blasts of a New England winter closed up farm work, he would take a pedler's pack on his back and tramp from place to place, supplying the wants of hundreds of families in the Connecticut Valley.

He was as shrewd as the traditional Yankee. No man or woman ever got the best of him in a trade, though he never swindled or cheated, except where he caught others trying to swindle or cheat him. Then he generally proved to them that the biter had been bitten.

Everybody liked Mose Caruthers because of his social qualities. If he stopped over night at a farm-house, he managed to amuse the women and children to such an extent that nothing was charged him for his lodging. He was a great imitator of animals—could imitate almost everything, from a mouse to a lion.

When the war came, Mose Caruthers left the farm in charge of his family near by, all the year round, and took to the road with his pack, saying he could make more money at peddling than by farming.

But no truer patriot ever lived.

Old Israel Putnam knew his sterling worth—his integrity, courage and loyalty to his country—and recommended him to General Washington as a scout whom he could trust.

The British soon came to know him as "Stuttering Mose," a half-witted old pedler, whom they never suspected of having brains enough to comprehend the trouble between the mother country and the colonies.

But, strange to say, his old neighbors never knew him to stutter until the war broke out.

Mose said it was caused by excitement. But a merry twinkle in his small grey eye caused them to suspect that something else besides excitement produced that stutter, which, to say the least, was the queerest they ever heard.

One day General Putnam sent for him to report at his head-quarters, and the old man at once got up and went. He never rode if he could help it, always saying he could walk further in a day than any horse could travel, and go where no horse could be forced to go. Recent experiments in long distance walking has corroborated the claim of the old scout. But they did not believe him in his day.

When he reached Putnam's head-quarters he walked in without saluting, to the surprise and disgust of the officers present.

"Ah, Moses, glad to see you," said the old patriot, grasping his hand with as much cordiality as though he were the highest official in the country. "I was afraid my messenger would not be able to find you."

"Well, he wouldn't if he had been slow about coming," he replied. "I was just fixing to get off with my pack."

"It was kind of you to come, then," remarked the general, as he arose and led the way into another room, motioning him to follow.

Mose followed and closed the door.

What transpired between those two hardy old patriots in that little room, will probably never be known, as both have long slept with their fathers, and no writings have ever been found among their effects that throw any light upon it. But a half hour later Stuttering Mose left head-quarters without saying good-by to anyone, and went tramping down the road toward the Sound on the south side of Connecticut.

He had his pack of notions with him, strapped to his back, and carried a stout stick or staff, to aid his locomotion.

Night came on by the time he was ten miles away from old Putnam's head-quarters. But he did not, as was usual with him, stop at any of the farm-houses on the way, though he passed several even after the sun went down. One old farmer who had known him for years, saw and hailed him as he passed. But he did not stop.

"My wife wants some needles," said the farmer.

"Haven't got any," was the response, as he continued his long strides.

"Waal, can't yer stop an' hev a bite of supper?" cried the farmer.

"Had supper, thank ye, Joe," he said, and in another minute he was going down the hill too fast to be stopped by any further parleying.

Mile after mile he made, and midnight found him in the great road that led toward New York and the British lines. Yet he kept straight ahead, as though he had a certain point to reach ere the stars faded out of sight again.

But as he neared King's Bridge he knew he was liable to run upon the scouts of either side at any moment, as each were watching the other day and night. He did not fear either side, as he had the confidence of both.

The patriots knew he was true. The British believed him loyal, but not sufficiently intelligent to comprehend the difference.

Just before daylight he was startled by a stern command to halt, from some one in the bushes on the road side.

He promptly halted, as he knew a bullet would enforce the order if he attempted to proceed.

"Here, you! Who are you?" demanded the voice again.

That challenge puzzled him.

He knew no trained soldier of Britain would challenge in that style. But he did not know whether it was from patriot or tory.

But he concluded to stutter:

"M-m-m-me, sir."

"Who the devil is m-m-me?" demanded the voice, mocking him.

"M-m-m-Mose Ca-ca-ca—!"

"Stop that chattering and tell us who you are," demanded the voice, "or I'll put a ball through you."

"D-d-d-d-don't shoot!" he stammered.

"Why, that's Stuttering Mose Caruthers, the pedler!" exclaimed a voice, and the next moment a half dozen patriots emerged from the woods into the road and surrounded the old man.

"Which way are you going, Uncle Mose?" one of them asked.

He looked keenly at the faces of several of the men, and recognized two as staunch patriots.

A dry chuckle came from him as he pointed westward over his shoulder with the thumb of his left hand.

"Why, you'll run into the redcoats if you go that way!" exclaimed a young lieutenant who was in command of the party.

"Yes, I know that," was the nonchalant reply of the old man, with not a single stutter in his articulation.

The young officer was not a very bright specimen of his country's defenders. He stared at the old pedler in undisguised surprise, and asked:

"Do you want to be captured and thrown into prison?"

Old Mose Caruthers gave him a contemptuous glance, as he asked:

"Do they capture old pedlers and lock 'em up?"

"Yes, when they can't stutter," said one of the patriots, laughing, at which the old man quickly replied:

"I c-c-c can d-d-d-do that!"

"Oh, you can, eh?" demanded the lieutenant, turning red in the face. "Well, you can't go any further that way. I won't allow any passing into the enemy's lines."

"Are you guarding the enemy's lines, or the patriots?" Mose asked.

"The patriots, of course."

"Ah!" and the old scout remained silent.

"What's your business?" the lieutenant finally asked.

"Pedling," he replied.

"And stuttering," added another.

"Are you a patriot?"

"Yes."

"Well, patriots have no business between the lines of the two armies. You had better turn back," and the young officer turned back into the bushes, followed by his men, leaving the old man standing alone in the road.

"A born fool!" muttered the old pedler, as he turned and started back in the direction he had come.

His tread was that of a man with a purpose, and in a few minutes he was a half mile away from the little guard by the roadside, stalking along at a steady gait.

Suddenly, without looking behind or forward, he wheeled and plunged into the woods, disappearing from sight as the stars were fading before the coming sun.

CHAPTER II.

BETTIE REYNOLDS' GOSSIP.

ONCE in the woods, the old scout turned westward again, and tramped steadily forward till he saw the sun-tints gilding the tops of the tallest trees. He calculated that he had gone past the patriot lines some three or four miles, and that it was time to return to the road again. It did not require a very brilliant intellect to see that if caught slipping about through the woods it would bring suspicion upon him; so turning again to the right, he struck the road after a sharp ten minutes' walk.

Just a mile further on, he stopped at a farm-house to show his wares. The women of the house knew him well, for he had often sold them such little things as they stood in need of.

"Oh, Mr. Caruthers!" exclaimed one of the young women, "I am so glad you have come. I want some bright new ribbons and sister Jane wants a thimble. She lost hers the night her sweetheart was to see her."

"Why, Bettie!" exclaimed Jane, giving her sister a reproachful look. "Don't be a goose!"

"S-s-s-she c-c-can't," stuttered the peddler. "She's a-d-d-d duck, ain't you, B-b-b-Bettie?" and he gently patted Bettie on her rosy cheek.

"Yes," said saucy Bettie. "I am a duck of a patriot, too!" and with that she gave a meaning glance at her elder sister that caused the latter to frown and appeal to her mother to make the saucy miss hush her foolish prattle.

"Bettie," chided her mother, "don't talk so much. You annoy people."

"No she d-d-d-don't!" exclaimed the pedler, suspecting at once that Jane's lover was either a tory or a British soldier. "I l-l-l-love t-t-t-to hear her ta-ta-ta-talk," and turning he gave the incorrigible miss an encouraging wink.

"So does everybody else but sister Jane," said Bettie. "Show me some bright new ribbons, Mr. Caruthers, and I'll tell you who sister Jane's new sweetheart is."

"Bettie Reynolds!" cried her mother, "shut up this instant!"

"T-t-t-tell me, Bettie," said the peddler, laughing, "and I'll g-g-give you a y-y-y-yard o' ri-ri-ribbon."

"Will you?" exclaimed the girl, her eyes beaming with delight and childish excitement.

"Y-y-y-yes," he stuttered, opening his pack, and displaying, among many other things, several varieties of colored ribbons. "T-t-take your c-c-choice, too."

Jane frowned, Mrs. Reynolds scolded, but Bettie blurted out:

"He's Captain Blathers, of the British army—there!"

and she snatched up a block of red ribbon, and held it up for her indignant sister to look at.

Jane Reynolds bounced out of the room in a towering rage, and Mrs. Reynolds' eyes snapped as though it would go hard with Bettie when the coast was clear. But she was politic enough to say, by way of explanation:

"Captain Blathers has stopped here a few times as his command was passing. There's nothing in it, of course."

Bettie was too excited over the contents of the pedler's pack to pay any attention to what her mother was saying. The old man seemed to take no further interest in the matter, except to cut off the yard of ribbon he had promised Bettie for giving Jane away.

"G-g-give it t-t-to Jane," he stuttered, as he held up a thimble to the mother.

The little gift at once mollified the mother, and Jane was recalled. She came in, looking very guilty, but met the accusing glance of the old scout with a smile.

"Mr. Caruthers makes you a present of this," said Mrs. Reynolds, giving Jane the thimble, the emblem of woman's industry.

"Thanks," she said; "you are very kind, as well as a very great tease."

He chuckled, and touched her under the chin.

"Y-y-you g-g-girls are all al-l-l-like," he said. "It's the m-m-man, n-n-not the u-u-uniform you w-w-want."

Jane blushed like a rose, but saucy Bettie tossed her curls over her shoulders, and said:

"You can't give me a man in a red coat. I'd rather have a ragged patriot than all the red-coated Britishers in the world."

The old scout chuckled.

"Still y-y-you w-w-want a man, eh?"

"Well, I wouldn't have a woman-husband, of course," she replied.

"You haven't had any breakfast this morning, have you?" Jane asked.

"N-n-no," he replied.

"Then come into the kitchen; we have just had breakfast."

He followed the three ladies into the old-fashioned farmers' kitchen, and sat down to a substantial meal, which Jane Reynolds placed before him.

He inquired about many acquaintances in that section, which was in what is now known as Westchester County in New York State, and known then as the "neutral ground," because it lay between the lines of the two armies for four or five years.

Mrs. Reynolds told him of the frequent incursions of the enemy, the depredations of the "cow-boys," (a set of worthless vagabonds, who were Whig or Tory as circumstances demanded. They were inclined to be Tory, though, because the British gave them protection while the patriots punished them severely for their misdeeds,) and the occasional visits of the patriots.

"Between them all," she said, sadly, "we have a trying time of it."

"Yes," said Jane, "I wish mother would sell the farm, and move into the city or further away from it."

"But you would much rather move into the city, though, wouldn't you?" remarked Bettie, with not a little sarcasm in her tone.

Jane did not deign a reply, and Bettie busied herself comparing her ribbon to her rosy cheeks.

During the meal, the old scout learned that Captain Blathers, of the British army, frequently rode out to the Reynolds place and spent an evening there.

That was enough. It was all he wanted to know. The wily Briton was either plotting the ruin of the girl, or was using her to get information as to the movements of the patriots, or both.

Taking his pack on his back, he bade the widow and her daughters good-by, and pushed on toward Kingsbridge, which was only a few miles away.

When within three miles of the bridge he met a squadron of British horse. They were dressed in their bright uniforms, and looked gay and festive as they pranced down the road in his direction. But he had often seen them before and did not attempt to dodge them. Indeed, to have done so, would have been fatal to him at the moment.

He halted at a spring under a spreading oak, as if to await their coming, and in a few minutes he was surrounded by the enemies of his country.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S NOTE.

THE squadron was under the command of a captain, who rode up, dismounted, and asked:

"Who are you?"

"I'm M-m-m-Mose Ca-ca-ca-Caruthers, the p-p-p-pedler," he stuttered, looking like a simpleton whose intelligence was only one or two degrees removed from blank idiocy.

"What are you doing here?"

"I w-w-wanted t-t-t-to get a d-d-drink o' w-wa-water."

"Why, that's old Mose Caruthers, captain," said the sergeant, saluting the officer. "We all know him as 'Stuttering Mose, the pedler.'"

"Is he rebel or loyal?"

The sergeant laughed.

"I guess he couldn't be much of either, captain. He doesn't know enough. But he's sharp as a two-edged sword on a trade. You can't cheat him."

The captain looked him over from head to foot and then asked:

"What have you got in your pack?"

Pedler like, at the prospect of a trade Mose slung the pack around, wriggled out of the straps and laid it carefully on the ground, stuttering all the time as though he was trying to say something. He opened it, displaying ribbons and a few articles of jewelry, together with many little things needed in every household.

Among other things was a handsome gold chain with a beautiful pencil attached to it. This he held up before the officer's eyes and stuttered:

"B-b-b-buy it for y-y-your wife."

"I have no wife."

"N-n-nice p-p-pre-present f-f-for a l-l-lady f-f-friend," he added.

The officer took the chain in his hand and examined it. It was of exquisite workmanship and quaint design.

"What's the price?" he asked.

"T-t-ten p-p-pounds," stuttered the pedler.

"Too much for such a gewgaw," tossing it back into the pack.

But the keen-eyed pedler saw that the chain had pleased the fancy of the officer, and was determined to sell it to him. Taking it up again he stuttered:

"T-t-t take it f-f-f-for n-n-nine pounds."

The captain took it in his hand and examined it again.

"I'll give you eight pounds for it," he said.

"Ca-c-c-can't do it, ca-c-c-captain," he said.

"You can afford to sell it to a king's man for that price, I think."

"N-n-n-no!" he stuttered. "G-g-g-good K-k-king George couldn't d-d-d-do it!"

The captain drew a purse from his pocket and counted out some gold coin.

"I haven't got nine pounds with me," he finally said, "but here are seven. Come to my quarters at Kingsbridge and I'll give you the two—say to-morrow."

"G-g-g-gimme note," said the wily old pedler; g-g-g-gimme n-n-note f-f-for two p-p-pounds."

The captain took a book from his pocket and wrote:

"Due bearer, two pounds, balance for gold chain and pencil.

"GERALD BLATHERS, Capt."

This he tore out and gave to Stuttering Mose, who looked at it carefully, as though reading it, holding it upside down all the time, to the no little amusement of the valiant captain and his men. Then with a very wise look on his face, he stowed it away in one of the numerous pockets in his clothes.

The captain put the chain in his pocket, and then asked: "Where are you going?"

"King's B-b-bridge, t-t-to-morrow," he replied, at which the whole command roared with laughter.

"Not such a fool, after all!" muttered the captain, as he turned to the spring to quench his thirst.

After drinking, he said to the sergeant:

"Sergeant Renwicke, remain here with the command till I come back."

The sergeant saluted and turned to the command, while the captain and five men mounted their horses and dashed down the road in the direction of the Widow Reynolds' place.

"Ah, you rascal!" said Stuttering Mose, as the captain disappeared through the dust his horses raised. "You have gone to pour poison in the ears of that confiding girl; but I'll watch you, and see that you don't——"

"What are you muttering about, Mose?" interrupted the sergeant, who was now in charge of the little squad of British horsemen.

"If h-h-he g-g-gets k-k-killed, I'm ruined!" groaned the old pedler, as though the thought of losing two pounds was really painful to him.

"Of course you would," said the sergeant. "He is liable to be killed at any time, for he is a very devil for getting into trouble. Just look at him now. He has gone off to see a girl, who lives within a mile or two of the rebel lines, with only five men. I expect we have seen him alive the last time."

"C-c-c-call him b-b-back!" cried the old pedler, pretending to be greatly excited.

The soldiers roared with merriment.

"Can't do it," said the sergeant, shaking his head; "he is my superior officer. I can't order him to do anything. I am under his orders."

The assumed air of dismay that Stuttering Mose put on would have made a stoic laugh.

"You will have to take your chances, old man," said the sergeant, after a pause of some minutes. "I wouldn't insure your two pounds for the half of it."

The old pedler busied himself in putting his pack together again, and threw it on his back.

"There, show us what you have got in your pack," said the sergeant. "Maybe we'll all buy something for our sweethearts."

But the peddler suspected a design to rob him, and said:

"N-n-n-no. I m-m-m-must g-g-g-get that t-t-t-two pound or d-d-d-double my p-p-p-prices."

"Hear the old skinflint!" cried the soldiers, surrounding him, and laying hands on his pack. "Here, show us your stock or——"

He wheeled around so as to face those who were interfering with his pack, stammering so no one could understand him.

"What in thunder are you talking about?" demanded the sergeant.

He continued to stutter, and such a jabber they never heard before. They couldn't get in a word edgewise.

"Stop that jabbering!"

But he didn't.

"Confound you, take *that!*" said the sergeant, dealing him a blow that sent him rolling in the dust.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REDCOATS TRY TO DUCK HIM IN A SPRING.

As he rolled over on the grass, the soldiers roared with merriment.

He scrambled to his feet, and stuttered worse than ever, if possible, not a single syllable of his words being understood.

"Shut up, you stuttering idiot!" cried one of the soldiers.

But he would not "shut up."

He talked and stuttered, seeming desperately trying to tell them something, and never could utter the word complete.

His excited manner and voluble stuttering seemed to afford them infinite amusement. One of them snatched his hat and started to run off with it. He very promptly snatched the military hat from the offender's head and placed it on his own head, still trying to speak.

But his stuttering grew worse, and was so incessant that one of the soldiers yelled at him to hush up.

He stuttered all the more, and the man undertook to knock him down. He sprang back to avoid the blow, and in doing so struck against another soldier with such force as to send him rolling over into the spring, where the mud and water soon spoiled his brilliant uniform.

The soldiers laughed heartily over the mishap; but the unfortunate victim came up as mad as a hornet.

"You clumsy idiot!" he hissed, in a towering rage, seizing him by the collar. "I'll drown you in that mud, pack and all! In with you!"

He made a desperate effort to pitch the stutterer into the spring. Mose seemed more intent on explaining the accident than in trying to save himself.

"Throw him in, comrade!" several soldiers exclaimed, crowding around to see the fun.

He dragged him to the very brink of the spring, and made a general convulsive movement.

But the old stutterer did not go. On the contrary the redcoat went in again, this time head foremost, to the intense surprise of the soldiers.

Mose turned to the sergeant, and continued stuttering at a fearful rate, whilst the soldiers pulled their comrade out of the spring.

"Oh, shut up!" yelled the sergeant. "You can't talk, so don't try."

But he tried harder than ever.

"Blast that stuttering tongue!" exclaimed the sergeant. "I'll see if I can't put a stop to it," and seizing him as the other had done he dragged him toward the spring.

Mose struggled as if to keep away from the spring.

"H-h-h-hold on!" he managed to yell.

"Yes, I'll hold on," retorted the sergeant.

"W-w-w-wait t-t-t-till——"

"Can't do it—you'd talk us to death!" interrupted the sergeant. "In with you, you——"

Mose suddenly made an electric movement, and the sergeant went into the spring, as his comrade had done, to the consternation of the whole party.

They all rushed to the sergeant's rescue, and hauled him out of the spring. His head was literally covered with mud, and his beautiful scarlet coat was ruined.

"Let me-m-m-me t-t-t-tell you," continued Mose, turning to a corporal at his side.

"You stuttering ass!" cried the valiant corporal, turning savagely upon him. "Maybe you think you can put me in the spring!" and with that he seized him around the waist and lifted him from the ground.

"Put him in, corporal!" yelled the entire party. "You'll be promoted if you do."

Mose kept on stuttering.

The corporal was a man who prided himself on his prowess. He had been victor in several personal encounters, and was regarded as dangerous by his comrades.

But as he straddled the spring, and tried to place the

old pedler's head in the water, he found it impossible to do so without diving with him himself, as Mose clung to him as close as his own skin.

"Shake him off!"

"Drop him!"

"Choke 'im!" and numerous other bits of advice were given the valiant corporal.

But it was easier to listen than to act upon such liberal advice.

Mose kept up his incessant stuttering, keeping, also, such a bear hug upon the corporal that that valiant son of Mars felt as though he would like to be free again.

He made an effort to free himself, and finally did so; but he went into the spring head first.

"Blast my h'eyes!" exclaimed an old Yorkshire redcoat.

"D-d-d-don't p-p-p-put m-m-m-me in the——"

"Oh, the devil!" exclaimed Sergeant Renwicke. "Put him in, men—the blundering idiot!"

Two soldiers seized him.

"Duck him good—stick his head to the bottom and leave him there!"

Mose clasped an arm around the neck of each and spread himself for the struggle, stuttering all the while, as if his life depended on getting an intelligible word out of his mouth.

"Put him in—drown him!" roared the sergeant, rushing up and dealing him a blow on the forehead with his clenched fist.

Mose's head flew back, as if from the blow; but his feet shot out like piston rods, and landed on the sergeant's stomach, doubling him up like a jack-knife, and sending him to grass most ignominiously.

Just as the two soldiers reached the edge of the spring, Mose gave a double shuffle with his feet, tripped them up, and sent them both into the spring, getting one foot in himself. To save themselves from a thorough ducking, they released their hold on him, and sought to catch somewhere for support.

This was what Mose wanted, and in a twinkling both were up to their shoulders, head first, in the spring.

The entire party rushed to pull them out, uttering cries of amazement at the wonderful prowess of the stuttering old pedler.

The men were drawn out, and the mud scraped from their faces.

"Blast the infernal old idiot!" cried the sergeant, "I believe he has been playing off on us all the time. Where is he? I'll run him through the body!" and he drew his saber to carry out his threat.

But Stuttering Mose was nowhere to be seen. He had slipped away unperceived while they were drawing the two soldiers out of the mud.

"Where is he?" he demanded, looking around in search of the stuttering pedler. "Have you let him get away?"

"Maybe he is in the spring, sergeant," said the corporal.

The sergeant was furious.

"Zounds!" he cried. "Did a stuttering old pedler duck five of the king's men in a spring in the presence of a score of their comrades and then get away? Look for him, men! I'll give a month's pay to the man who captures him!"

That was enough to arouse a Briton.

The hope of pecuniary reward put new life into them. They scattered in every direction, and scoured the woods in search of Mose, but without avail.

He had gone out of reach of pursuit, for he made great haste to get out of the way, knowing they would do him all the harm they could after the trick he had played them.

"Ha-ha-ha!" he chuckled, as he trudged through the woods. "They thought they would have some fun with the old man, did they? Well, they did, but I think the old man had some fun, too. I like good water as well as any man, but I don't like to be ducked in a spring where

redcoats have been soaked. Oh, won't Captain Blathers be mad when he finds their uniforms covered with mud! And so he is Jane Reynolds' lover. Well, I feel sorry for her if she places any confidence in him. He is a bad man. She will get that pretty chain and pencil from him, though, and his due bill will aid me in my mission. I'll catch the rascal yet, and perhaps save Jane Reynolds from his clutches."

CHAPTER V.

STUTTERING MOSE IS ARRESTED IN THE LINES.

ONCE more free from his persecutors, the old scout proceeded with all haste to Kingsbridge on the secret mission in the interest of the patriots. Kingsbridge was not far off, but he considered that it was best not to approach it as though that was the objective point of his journey. He well knew the British were suspicious and distrustful, and so he made it appear that he was simply peddling goods from house to house, by making a visit to every house in the vicinity.

House after house was visited, and in many he sold a goodly quantity of goods at a large profit, until he began to strike houses in which British officers were quartered.

Thus they recognized him as a harmless, half-witted, stuttering old pedler, to distrust whom would be a shame.

It was not difficult for him to cross the lines. He simply trudged along behind two officers and their ladies, and thus passed unquestioned. He had been seen by the soldiers so often that no man ever thought of challenging him.

Once inside the lines he did not make it a rule to go to every house in sight. He visited only a few to keep up his regular reputation as a pedler, and then went to a house where lived an old man and his wife, whose two sons were in the patriot army.

The old couple received him with a kindly sparkle of the eye, and a hearty grasp of the hand.

"Ah! friend Caruthers!" said the old man, "have you any news of my two brave boys?"

"Yes, friend Barton, I have," he replied, without a stutter.

The old lady sprang up and ran to his side to hear the news.

"Your two boys have been in a desperate fight with the enemy, and were both——"

The old lady turned pale, and buried her face in her hands, while the old father groaned aloud.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" Mose asked, looking from one to the other in no little surprise. "Your brave boys have both been made captains for gallant conduct on the battle-field, and here you two are——"

"Glory be to God!" cried the happy old father, and the old mother dropped down into an old armchair and wept tears of joy. They were loyal patriots and they loved their country. But they had long feared their two brave boys were killed. But now they were both alive, and officers under Washington. Their cup of joy was full, and they were prouder than ever of the two boys whom they had given to their country.

"What think you, friend Caruthers?" the old man asked, after he had kissed the happy mother of his boys. "Will General Washington ever be able to drive King George's men out of this country?"

"Yes, he will, friend Barton, and your and your good wife will live to see it," was the reply. "Our friends are brave and full of fight, and can whip the redcoats every time they meet in equal numbers. But I want to see your nephew, Silas. Where can I find him?"

"He will be here to-night," said the good wife, turning suddenly in her chair, "and has been every night this week. Does he know you want to see him?"

The old scout glanced furtively at the good old soul, and saw that she suspected something. He knew better

than to trust anything to a garrulous old couple, however loyal they might be to the cause they loved so well.

"Why, how could he expect to meet me here," he asked, "seeing I have not been here for months?"

The old lady was satisfied. How indeed, could her nephew, Silas Barton, expect him!

The old scout then sat down between the old couple, and told them of his adventures in the country as he traveled about with his pack, until the sun went down and the stars came out.

The good dame then went about getting supper, leaving her husband and Stuttering Mose together. The two men then whispered together for a long time, during which the savory smell of ham and eggs almost made the old scout spring up and storm the kitchen.

"Come in to supper," she called at last, and Stuttering Mose was the first to respond.

But they were scarcely seated at the table ere a loud knocking on the door aroused them. The old lady turned pale as death, and her husband looked helplessly at Stuttering Mose.

"They are redcoats, I guess," said Mose Caruthers, calmly. "I will stutter badly when talking to them, and you must not let 'em know but what I have always been a stutterer. Do you understand me?"

"Yes," they both said.

Bang—bang—bang! came furious knocks on the door, which threatened to demolish it.

"Open in the name of the king!" demanded a voice from without.

"Open the door, friend Barton," said Stuttering Mose, in a low tone of voice, and the old patriot went to the door and opened it.

"Is that stuttering pedler here?" Sergeant Renwicke demanded, stalking into the room, followed by a half dozen of his men.

"Y-y-y-yes," responded Mose, coming forward and looking as foolish as any simpleton possibly could, "h-h-h-here I am."

The sergeant's uniform was still besmeared with mud, and his eyes fairly glittered with rage.

"Well, the captain wants to see you at his quarters, you stuttering idiot," said the sergeant.

"Y-y-yes," stuttered Mose, "I'll g-g-go r-r-right now."

"Well, come along and be quick about it. If I didn't have to produce you alive I'd cut your throat from ear to ear for you, you kicking, stuttering ass of a Yankee pedler."

"Y-y-yes," he stammered, as he turned to follow the sergeant.

The sergeant was wrathful.

The kick Stuttering Mose had given him in the stomach made him dreadfully sick, and he wanted revenge. The captain had berated him terribly for letting the old pedler duck five of his men in the spring and thus spoil their uniforms. He had sent them out in search of the old pedler, with orders to bring him to his quarters as soon as found.

They had little difficulty in finding him, as everybody remembered the pedler and his pack.

"Come on with you," commanded Sergeant Renwicke, who really wanted to murder him in cold blood for the trick he had played him that day.

"Y-y-y-yes, c-c-c-come on," said Mose, leading the way.

They soon reached the captain's quarters and found that officer somewhat under the influence of liquor.

"Are you the man who ducked my men in the spring to-day?" the captain asked, as soon as the old pedler entered his quarters.

"N-no, c-c-c-copen," he answered, "t-t-t-they f-f-f-fell in."

"Oh, they did, eh? How did they fall in?"

Stuttering Mose commenced an explanation in his stut-

tering way, but not a word could anybody understand. The captain eyed him with an amused look on his face.

"Hold on," he said, and Mose suddenly stopped. "Did not they just jump in because they couldn't understand a word you said?"

"N-n-n-n-no," and then he again commenced that incomprehensible stuttering, and rattled on till the captain and a half-dozen officers with him fairly roared with merriment.

The sergeant then made him hush, and explained how the first man got into the spring, and, for a wonder, told the truth. His description of the manner in which the others, including himself, got in, made the party scream with laughter.

"See here, you cunning old simpleton!" roared the captain, "I owe you two pounds for that gold chain. You owe ten pounds for ruining five uniforms of the king's men; that brings you eight pounds in my debt. Have you got eight pounds about you?"

Stuttering Mose began stuttering again in a very exciting manner, but couldn't get out a word that anyone could understand.

"Search him, sergeant," commanded Captain Blathers.

That suited Sergeant Renwicke, and he at once seized him.

Somehow they got mixed up, and the valiant sergeant landed on his head nearly ten feet away. He never could understand how it happened, though he tried to recollect everything about it.

Mose approached the captain, and excitedly stuttered, and gesticulated like a Frenchman, but without avail.

"Here, hand out that eight pounds," roared the captain, drawing his sword, "or I'll run you through!"

Stuttering Mose crowded up against him, and stuttered like a flutter mill.

The captain gave back.

Mose followed right up against him, stuttering louder and more furiously than ever, making desperate efforts to get out a word or two.

"Blast you, stand back!" roared the captain, trying to use his sword.

Mose caught his hand, and held it as in a vise, continuing his eternal stuttering as though every word was intelligible.

CHAPTER VI.

STUTTERING MOSE GETS AWAY WITH THE CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN BLATHERS now began to grow uneasy about his own personal safety. He tried to extricate his sword-hand from the grasp of the stutterer, but without success.

"Keep off, I say, you stuttering idiot!" yelled the captain, "or I'll——" and he aimed a blow at the old pedler's head.

Stuttering Mose dodged it, and the next moment he seized him around the waist, and leaped through the window with him, taking a shower of glass along at the same time.

The officers, who had been laughing at the scene, now uttered a cry of horror, drew their swords, and darted out of the house to go to the rescue of their brother officer.

They found him on the ground, partially dazed by the sudden occurrence. But the old pedler was nowhere to be seen.

"Are you hurt, captain?" one of the officers asked, assisting Blathers to his feet.

Blathers didn't really know whether he was or not. He looked around as if in search of the pedler who had dared to lay a hand on his sacred person.

Stuttering Mose was not there.

He had vanished.

"Where is the wretch?" cried Captain Blathers. "I'll run him through the body! The stuttering idiot is too

dangerous to be allowed to run at large. Where is he—where is he?"

"He has made his escape, I guess," answered one of the officers, looking around under the starlight. "He is certainly a very queer character. But you were rather hard on him, captain."

"You don't know the tricky rascal as I do!" said the captain, in a towering rage. "I'll have him hung up for this, if I can get my hands on him again. Sergeant Renwicke."

"Here, sir!" promptly responded the sergeant, though blood was trickling down his face from a wound where his head came in contact with the floor.

"Go and hunt him up again. Handcuff and bring him to me. I'll teach him a lesson he will not soon forget."

The sergeant went at once to work to obey, taking the same men with him that he had before.

"He must have gone back there for his pack," said he, to his men. "We'll go where we found him. Come on," and he led the way toward the cottage of the Bartons.

When he leaped through the window with the British officer, the old scout did it merely to save the money he had in his possession. He well knew they would not be satisfied with the eight pounds demanded of him, but would take all—nearly a hundred pounds.

As he landed outside he hurled the officer from him with such force as to render him insensible for a minute or two. Then he bounded away like a deer, and was soon out of sight in the surrounding darkness.

But he did not stop till he reached the house of the Bartons. He rushed in and said:

"Mrs. Barton, can you let me have a dress of yours to wear? I've escaped from the redcoats, but they will come again for me."

"Yes, of course I can, Mose Caruthers," said the patriotic old lady, springing up and leading the way into another room. "Here are dresses and underclothing, and there is a bonnet, shawl and apron. You know how to put 'em on?"

"Oh, yes."

She left him to dress himself.

In less than ten minutes he appeared, looking as much like a female as could well be imagined. The old lady herself was astonished.

Just then there came a knock at the door, and Stuttering Mose dropped down into a chair and seized the old lady's knitting.

Mr. Barton opened the door,

It was his nephew, Silas Barton.

"Ah, come in, nephew," he said, taking the young man by the hand and drawing him into the room.

Stuttering Mose did not even look around to see who it was, but kept busy with the knitting.

"Landsakes alive!" exclaimed the old lady; "you'll everlastingly ruin that stocking, Mose Ca——"

Mose made a sudden motion toward her that cut his name short on her lips.

"Don't pronounce that name again to-night," he said. "I am your sister, Abigail Smith, from Connecticut, come to stay with you."

She whispered:

"I forgot—give me that knitting," and reaching out her hand, she took the knitting from him.

The nephew, Silas Barton, was a strongly built young man, whose keen wit had induced General Putnam to suggest to him to remain in the city and watch the movements of the enemy. He caught the name on his aunt's lips and understood the situation at once.

He went up to Stuttering Mose, reached out his hand, and said:

"How do you do, Aunt Abigail? How did you leave all the folks at home?"

"Why, Nevvy, is it you?" exclaimed Mose, looking up

at the young man through a pair of spectacles. "Well, I declare, how you have grown!"

The voice was so well trained that even Mrs. Barton was astonished at his wonderful power of imitation.

Silas Barton laughed in spite of himself, and, seated close by the side of the disguised old pedler, wanted to ask why such an extraordinary disguise was necessary.

"Shut up, now," said Stuttering Mose, as the sound of footsteps were heard outside. "You know me; that's enough for the present."

Just then a loud knock on the front door was heard, and a voice called out loudly:

"Open, in the king's name!"

Old man Barton opened the door, and the sergeant stalked into the little cottage, followed by a half dozen dragoons in brilliant uniforms.

"Where is that stuttering old idiot of a pedler?" demanded Sergeant Renwicke, in very imperious tones.

"Why, you came and took him off with you an hour ago!" exclaimed the old man, in tones of well-feigned surprise. "Did he get away?"

"Yes; and got away with the captain, too," replied the sergeant. "We are afraid he'll get away with all the king's troops in America, the blundering old fool!"

There was a tinge of irony in the sergeant's tone.

The old scout, secure in the disguise of an elderly lady, chuckled audibly; at which the sergeant wheeled on her, and asked:

"What are you laughing at? Tell me where he is, or I'll march all of you to the guard-house. I believe you are all a pack of rebels, any how."

"Sergeant," said old Barton, "we are helpless. You can do with us as you please. Search the house, and see if you can find him. If you are convinced of our innocence, leave us alone in our old age."

The tones of the old man's voice seemed to touch a chord of his better nature, and the sergeant replied:

"Oh yes, of course. Search the house, men."

They at once proceeded to search the house, returning at the end of five minutes with Stuttering Mose's pack, which they had found in one of the rooms.

"Ah, that's his pack," said the sergeant, grimly.

"That was here when you took him away," said the disguised pedler. "Did you come for him or his pack?"

"We'll take both."

"No you won't," and the remark was very emphatic. "You can't rob the poor old man behind his back. If ye catch him, well and good—you can have the pack. But just because you can't get him you want to rob his pack. Ye can't do it while Betsy Smith is around," and with that he picked up the pack, threw it in a corner of the room, and stood over it in a defiant attitude.

"Ha-ha-ha! old woman," laughed the sergeant, "do you defy the king's men?"

"Yes. I'd slap King George's face if he were to do such a thing. The poor old man is a loyal king's man. You have no right to rob him. I'll go to Sir Henry and tell him how you tried to rob loyal men."

The sergeant hesitated. He knew that he had not been ordered to seize the pack. Only the pedler was wanted. He *might* prove his loyalty, in which case the matter would be investigated, which he did not wish to have done.

CHAPTER VII.

A TERRIBLE OLD WOMAN.

SERGEANT RENWICKE did not wish to be defied by an old woman, though, in the presence of his men. He wanted to give her a severe fright, and then leave the pedler's pack in her possession as an act of charity.

"Old woman," he said, "I merely want to search the pack for evidence of disloyalty and—"

"That's a lie," she blurted out. "Ye know the poor old soul is as loyal as ye are. You want to rob him."

"I know my duty, old woman," said the valiant sergeant, advancing toward the corner.

"And I know mine, too," she said snatching up an iron poker which had been standing in the corner of the fireplace. "I kill all our hogs every winter by knocking 'em on the head. I can kill two-legged hogs just as well as any other kind."

"Gracious mercy, Sister Abigail!" cried old lady Barton, in real alarm. "You will get us all murdered!"

"I don't care. I won't sit by and see a poor old man robbed of everything he has in the world, and he a poor fool, too. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you great big sergeant. You are a disgrace to the uniform you wear."

This was more than he could bear. He did not fear the iron poker because it was in the hands of an old woman.

But that "old woman" had handled him twice before, and now for the third time they had met.

The iron poker was thrust against his breast, as he advanced, and he staggered back with a cry of pain on his lips.

"Oh, you think the old woman can't do anything, do you!" she exclaimed. "Don't you know I can split your head with this poker?"

"Seize her, men!" angrily cried the sergeant, beside himself with rage.

Three dragoons advanced to obey the sergeant's order.

Of course they didn't draw any weapons. Three British soldiers draw weapons on one old woman! They would scorn to do such a thing, and the result was they were all three laid out with broken heads in just ten seconds.

Sergeant Renwicke was astonished. He had heard of belligerent females, but this was the first time he had ever met one.

The old lady's blood was up.

She rushed at the sergeant, exclaiming:

"You great big cowardly thief, I'll show you how to assault an old woman. Take that—and that——"

She gave him several thrusts that threatened to puncture his carcass.

He drew his sword, and hoarsely cried out:

"Off—off, you old hog, before I run you through!"

She raised the iron poker and aimed a blow that broke his saber at the hilt. The blade fell to the floor with a ring that told of good metal.

He was thus at her mercy unless he chose to fire on her. That he did not care to do, and so he darted through the open door to save his head from contact with the poker.

The others followed like sheep, one receiving a blow that made his head ring for an hour.

"Clear out!" she cried. "You can't do any stealing here!" and then she closed the door and locked it.

"She is the devil!" groaned the sergeant, rubbing the places where she had punched him with the poker. "No wonder the sons of such women fight and die game. I'd rather meet a dozen men in fight, than face that old hag again."

"So had I," said another. "My head rings yet, blast her old picture!"

Inside the house the old scout was chuckling all over. Silas, nephew of the Bartons, grinned from ear to ear, and old lady Barton said:

"It was funny, but won't they come back and arrest all of us?"

"They may come back after me," said Stuttering Mose, "but they won't find me or my pack."

"Why not?"

"I am going away—down into the city," he replied; and then, placing his mouth close to the ear of young Silas Barton, whispered:

"Meet me to-morrow, at Benny Burke's."

Silas nodded his head, and then the old scout turned to Mrs. Barton, and said:

"I will now change this dress," and went into the adjoining room to do so, taking the pack with him. In a few minutes he returned, dressed as a Quaker, no more resembling Stuttering Mose, the pedler, than he did General Washington himself.

"Mercy on us! who is it?" exclaimed old lady Barton, both hands raised, as she stared at him.

"Friend Sarah," said the pretended Quaker, "thy curiosity is unseemly. I will leave thy house lest those men of blood return and do thee harm," and with that he started toward the door with the pack in his hand.

"Mose Caruthers!" gasped the dumfounded old lady, as she recognized his voice.

"Woman, hold thy tongue!" he said, sternly, and then he passed out of the house.

Husband and wife and nephew looked at each other in silence for a minute or two, and then all three burst into a hearty laugh.

"Oh, I shall hurt myself laughing!" exclaimed the old patriot, holding his sides with his hands. "It is too good! Never heard the like!" and he laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. The good wife and nephew also joined him.

"He can take care of himself anywhere," said the old patriot. "I shall never be uneasy about him. How he did lay about him with that poker!"

"I thought he would be killed," said the old lady.

"But he wasn't, and he knew it."

The pretended Quaker passed out of the house and walked down the road toward a small cottage, at the door of which he knocked, giving a certain number of distinct raps.

The door was opened by a Dutchman, who eyed the Quaker hat and coat suspiciously.

"Eh—vat vas dose?"

Mose leaned forward and whispered something in his ear.

"Yah! Vas dot id?" the Dutchman exclaimed, grasping his hand in both of his. "Den you coom in mit mine house!"

"No, not now, Hans," he replied. "Put this pack out of the way, and keep it till I come for it."

"Yah; I geep it mit mineself," said Hans, and the next moment he was alone.

The Quaker was gone.

"By shiminy, he vas gone soon already mit himself," and closing the door, he proceeded to conceal the pack in a secret place, where even a most rigid search would not be likely to reach it.

Armed with a stout stick, the pretended Quaker walked leisurely along the road that led down toward the city, meeting a few drunken soldiers on the way. It was nearly ten miles to Benny Burke's little tavern down on Pearl street. He was determined to reach there before midnight, if possible. As he was a good walker, he could easily do so if not prevented by circumstances he could not control.

When about half way there he met three half drunken redcoats in the road.

"Halloo, old broad brim!" hailed one of the party. "Where yer goin'?"

"I am returning to the city," was the reply.

"Been out on er lark, eh?"

"Verily, I have been tarrying with friend James a while. Thy humor is unseemly, friend."

"Verily I am drunk, old Broadbrim, an' don't care er (hic) snap for all er guards (hic) in er worl'."

"Verily, thou hast tarried too long at the wine cup. It hath overcome thee like a flood. Thou art in——"

"Oh, shut up an' give us (hic) a drink!" demanded one of the men, reeling up to him. "Quakers all have good rum."

"Nay, thou art deceived. I never drink the vile liquor of the evil one."

"Dance, then! Dance a jig," and two of them seized him and commenced a wild double shuffle with him. In less than ten seconds they were both thrown on their heads by the roadside, where they lay stunned and bleeding.

The other one was too drunk to notice what was going on, so the pretended Quaker passed on without further molestation.

"Verily I am beset by the wicked sons of Belial, but I shall yet go my way in peace," he muttered, and then a soft chuckle escaped him.

Just before Benny Burke, the jolly landlord of the "Pewter Mug," a little tavern on Pearl street, was closing for the night, Stuttering Mose, disguised as a Quaker, entered and asked:

"Friend, I am weary and would sleep. Canst thou give me food and lodging for the money I will give thee?"

"Of course I can, friend Broadbrim," was the reply. "Benny Burke never refused a fellow being a share of his comforts. You are late, though, and the wife has gone to bed. I can give you some cheese and——"

"Yea, thou knowest just what an empty stomach craves. I will take thy cheese and——"

"Something to wash it down with, eh?" and the jolly, good-natured landlord poked him under the fifth rib with his finger.

"Verily, thou temptest me to put the bottle to my lips," said the Quaker, as the door was closed and locked.

"People don't need much temptation to do that, friend Broadbrim," remarked Benny Burke, "for I keep the stuff that makes men feel better when they drink it."

"Thou art giving thyself praise, friend. Be not boastful. Pride cometh before a fall. But I will try thy wine, and see if thou art a man of truth."

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating, they say," said Burke, producing cheese, crackers and a bottle of wine, which he placed on a small table, near which the Quaker had seated himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOLLY LANDLORD OF THE "PEWTER MUG."

BENNY BURKE was very familiar with the peculiarity of Quakers, and knew how to jest with them. He knew they were quiet, substantial, straightforward people, who never indulged in much foolishness.

But the good nature and pleasant ways of this Quaker customer won his heart. It was not every Quaker who would wash down a half pound of cheese with a bottle of wine, as this one did.

When he was through he leaned back in his chair, saying:

"Verily, my inner man is contented and at peace with all the world."

"You are always at peace with the world, are you not?" Benny asked, knowing the Quaker belief in regard to war and violence.

"Yea, friend Burke, but the flesh is sometimes weak and it becomes necessary to cast down the son of Belial."

"Yes, that's so. I knew one of your people once who could kick, and he sometimes did it. A man pulled his nose and he threw down his hat, pulled off his coat and pitched in. That man never tackled another Quaker."

"Verily thou remindest me that I am the man. I was tempted and the man did fall after I hit him," and the pretended Quaker groaned as though in distress over the wickedness of the act.

"The devil!" exclaimed Benny, in great surprise. "I don't remember ever seeing you before!"

"Thou shouldst not speak so familiarly of the evil one, friend Benjamin," said the guest.

But Benny's curiosity was aroused, and he stared the Quaker full in the face for several minutes. He could not

remember seeing that face before. Finally he went behind the bar to attend to something before retiring for the night. His back was turned toward the Quaker. The old scout took off the hat, put the wig in his pocket and sat there as the old stuttering pedler whom everybody in Connecticut knew as Mose Caruthers.

After a while Benny Burke lit a candle and said:

"Now I will show you up to your room if you will follow me."

"G-g-g-g-glad t-t-t-t-to hear it," stuttered Mose, as he arose to follow him up stairs.

The familiar stutter caused Burke to wheel around and face him.

There stood Mose Caruthers before him with the Quaker hat in his hand.

"Why, bless my two everlasting eyes!" he exclaimed, staring at the smiling old scout. "You just took me in, Mose Ca——"

"Sh-sh-sh-hush, not so loud!" cautioned the scout. "Don't call that name again. They are after me to-night."

"The deuce! They know you stop here whenever you come to town," said Burke, in a tone of alarm, "and they will come here for you."

Of course they will, but they won't come after a Quaker," and the old scout chuckled as he followed the landlord up the stairs to the room he was to occupy.

"I have fooled 'em twice to-night," he added, "and can do it a dozen times if necessary. I am Welcome Goodwin as long as I am a Quaker, Benny Burke."

"Yes—yes—ha—he—he!" and the jolly landlord laughed heartily over the clever manner in which the old scout had played Quaker on him.

We will now return to Sergeant Renwicke and his men, who were forced to beat a retreat before the supposed old woman at the cottage of the Bartons.

The sergeant went back to report to Captain Blathers his inability to capture the stuttering pedler.

"Why couldn't you take him?" demanded the irate captain.

"Because we couldn't find him," he replied. "We went back to the cottage where we first found him, but he had not been there."

"Was his pack there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go fetch it here. He'll have to come to me for it, the stuttering blockhead."

"An old woman has it, and she won't give it up."

"Won't give it up!" cried the captain. "What do you mean?"

"She took an iron poker, knocked three men down, and broke my sword off at the hilt with a blow. I dared not fire on an old woman, and yet we'll have to kill her before we can get it, captain."

Captain Blathers was amazed.

"Who is this woman?" he asked, after a pause of a minute or two.

"Her name is Abigail Smith, she says, and claims that we want to rob the poor old pedler."

Captain Blathers was no fool, though he sometimes did foolish things. His suspicions were excited.

"Was she there when you brought him away to-night?" he asked.

"We did not see her."

"Sergeant Renwicke, that old woman was the pedler himself, or some other man in disguise. There is something wrong. That pedler is a spy; I am sure of it. He acts like a fool, but he is too much for any who have yet stopped him. Go back—but hold on; I'll go with you. She must be taken at all hazard."

Captain Blathers accompanied the sergeant and his men back to the cottage whence they had just been ignominiously driven, and demanded admittance in the name of the king.

The old man opened the door, and the captain, sword in hand, sprang into the house.

"Where is that old woman?" he demanded of the old man.

"She has left, sir," he replied; "she and the young man."

"Where have they gone?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Why did she leave?"

"She said she was afraid the soldiers would come back and arrest her for striking one of the king's men."

"Where is that pack of the pedler?"

"She took it away with her."

"Search the house, sergeant."

The sergeant searched the house throughout, and reported the old woman and the pack both *non est*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WILY OLD QUAKER.

THE captain looked sternly at the old man Barton, and asked.

"Who was that woman who carried off that pack?"

"Abigail Smith, of Stamford, Connecticut," was the reply.

"Who is she?"

"Sister to Moses Caruthers, the pedler."

"Ah!" and the valiant captain could see why the woman should take such an interest in the pedler's pack. It looked altogether reasonable and just. Of course the sister of such a brother could wield an iron poker in a very ugly way.

"Sergeant," he said, "they are yet in the lines. They must be found. They have a hiding-place somewhere and she has gone to carry the pack to him. Send out a dozen men to scour the roads down to the city, with instructions to bring them both in."

The sergeant, captain and men then left the house again, and the old couple were once more alone.

"Will the good Lord ever forgive me for that lie?" the old man said, as he entered his wife's room.

"Yes, James, for it was done for a good purpose. It may save Mose's life, and you know he would have done as much for you."

"Lord bless you, yes. Mose would lie the stars out of the sky for his country and friends. He-he-he, they'll never get Mose dead to rights, Sarah. He's too sharp for them."

The patriotic old couple slept till sunrise, without any further molestation from the redcoats. But, just as they sat down to breakfast, a party of them came and searched the house again, to see if the stuttering pedler had returned.

They went away, however, satisfied that the old couple had told the truth about the pedler and the woman with the poker.

Early the next morning, young Silas Barton met the old scout in a little upper room in Benny Burke's little tavern, and there gave him all the plans of the works at Kingsbridge and the destination of Tryon's expedition, which was then about to start to plunder the towns of Connecticut, beside other important information, which General Putnam was anxious to have.

"They are looking for you everywhere," said Silas, when their conference had ended.

"Except in the right place," laughed the old scout. "That sergeant feels badly, doesn't he?"

"Yes; and he vows to kill you on sight, if he ever meets you again."

"We'll be sure to meet again," said the old scout, dryly; "but he won't kill me."

"How are you going to get over the lines, now that they are on the lookout for you?" Silas asked.

"Oh, they won't suspect a pious old Quaker, will they?"

"They might. They suspect everybody since the old woman played 'em a game of poker last night."

The old scout laughed long and heartily at the remark, and ordered a bottle of wine on the strength of it.

They drank the wine, and then young Barton took leave of the scout and left the tavern.

The Quaker did not come down from his room till high noon. He wanted rest and time to think over the plan of his escape from the city. He found several soldiers there drinking ale when he entered the tap room, two of whom seemed to be watching his movements with particular interest.

To affect an utter indifference to their presence was his only recourse, so he sauntered out on the street and strolled down toward the Battery. To his surprise, the two soldiers followed and kept him in sight.

"Oh, this won't do," he muttered to himself. "If they pounce upon me in this disguise, though they know I don't belong to the Continental army, they'll hang me as a spy at sunrise to-morrow morning. I must shake 'em off some way."

After walking about for an hour or so, he returned to the "Pewter Mug" tavern, and told Benny Burke of the two soldiers who were watching his movements.

"Drug 'em, Benny—drug 'em very strong till I can get away this evening," he said, and just then the two soldiers strolled in as though they were merely in for another mug of ale.

The Quaker advanced to the table where they had seated themselves, and said:

"I see, from thy uniform, that thou art a kingsman, friend."

"Yes," said the soldier, "we are soldiers of good King George."

"The good king must have men of war to sustain his authority. I am a man of peace as opposed to war, but being loyal to my king, I am constrained to ask thee to partake of some of the good drink which my good friend Benjamin knoweth so well how to prepare."

"Of course we will, eh, comrade?" responded the first soldier, very promptly, turning to his comrade.

"Yes, of course—a hot rum for me, landlord."

The Quaker sat down at the table, and engaged them in conversation while Benny Burke was preparing the drinks for them. His pleasant manner and liberality greatly pleased the two soldiers. He condemned the wicked rebellion and praised the king so sincerely that they were totally disarmed, and easily fell into the snare he had prepared for them.

Burke brought the drinks, and all three drank to the health of the king.

Several more drinks were taken, and in less than an hour's time the two soldiers were in a drunken sleep, and utterly oblivious of the busy world around them.

The Quaker then got up, bade Benny Burke good-by, and left the tavern.

The sun was now getting low, and dark clouds lowered, threatening to deluge the earth with a flood of rain. The old Quaker tramped up the road through what is now the Bowery and Third Avenue, in New York city, toward Harlem and Kingsbridge.

Night came on, and still he trudged along till he reached the cottage of Hans, the Dutchman, with whom he had left his pack.

A knock on the door brought Hans forward.

"Mine Gott in Himmell!" he exclaimed, as he beheld the Quaker, a set he hated on account of their non-combative principles. "Vat vas dose, eh?"

"Give me the pack, Hans, and I will be off," said the Quaker in a low tone of voice.

"Py tam!" exclaimed Hans, "vot for you say dot?"

The Quaker leaned forward, and whispered something in Hans' ear, which wrought a wonderful change in him.

"Yah, dat is goot," he said, turning and going for the

pack, with which he returned in a few moments. The Quaker took the pack, pressed the honest Dutchman's hand, and then turned away into the darkness of the gathering storm.

"Pour down, ye waters, and deluge the earth!" soliloquized the old scout. "Let the thunder shake the universe, but rest quiet, ye tongues of forked lightning. I want darkness rather than light," and he trudged along the road with the pack securely strapped on his back.

In another hour he was near the line of sentries, and could hear their challenges. The rain began to fall in big pattering drops, and in another minute it was pouring in torrents.

"Now is my chance!" he mentally exclaimed, as he crept forward toward one of the grim sentinels on the line.

CHAPTER X.

THE ESCAPE—HEADING OFF A LOVER.

THE heavy downpour of rain rendered footsteps inaudible even alongside of one, hence Stuttering Mose had no fear of being heard by the sentinel. His only fear was in being seen. If the darkness would continue just five minutes longer he would be safe. The darkness would continue all night if the electric flashes of lightning did not break it, and that was just what he dreaded most.

But he was in the service of his country, whose liberties were being crushed by her enemies. His country required her sons to risk life and limbs in defense of freedom, and Mose Caruthers was one of her sons who never flinched in the hour of danger.

Under the protecting roar of the storm he crept forward to cross the line when the sentinel should have passed to the other end of his beat.

But just as he was on the line a vivid flash of lightning came, revealing everything as brightly as the noon-day sun. Of course, it was only for a second, and then it was darker than before. Yet Stuttering Mose saw the sturdy sentinel, and knew that the sentinel saw him plainly.

With the quick intuition of danger, Mose threw himself on the ground, flat on his face. And the next moment came the flash and report from the sentinel's musket.

The ball struck the pack on his back, lodging in a mass of silk ribbons, which he had closely packed in that part.

"Now for the woods!" he muttered to himself, springing to his feet and bounding forward like a frightened deer.

The alarm was quick. The sentinel reported what he had seen to the officer of the guard—a man with a pack on his back, slipping across the line.

"Ah!" said Captain Blathers, when he heard the sentinel's story, "that was our stuttering pedler. That man is a spy, everybody else's opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. He came into our lines unsuspected, but had the good sense to try to get away unseen."

The gallant captain was chagrined beyond measure, as was Sergeant Renwicke. They both thirsted for revenge, and had hoped to capture him ere he could recross the lines.

But they were doomed to disappointment, for the wary pedler lost no time in getting safely away from that vicinity. Dark as it was, he was woodsman enough to find his way to the main road, which ran toward Stamford and New Haven. This he followed, till daylight brought him to the farm-house of the Widow Reynolds. The household had begun preparations for breakfast, when he surprised them at the kitchen-door.

"Why, Mr. Caruthers!" exclaimed Bettie, the saucy, rosy-cheeked younger daughter of the widow.

"Law, now, Moses Caruthers!" cried the widow; "you look as though you had been out in the rain all night."

"So I have; and as wet as a drowned rat," he replied.

"And as hungry as a famished wolf," put in Bettie.

"Lass, you are as wise as a serpent. I am indeed hungry, as well as wet."

"You know very well that you can't stay hungry in my house, Mose Caruthers," remarked the good widow.

"Of course I do, and that is why I stopped here. How are ye all?"

"Well as ever," answered Bettie, busying herself in assisting her mother in preparing the breakfast.

Mose removed his pack, and squared himself before the fire to dry his wet clothing. In a few minutes a cloud of steam arose above his head, as his clothes began to dry.

By the time the breakfast was ready the old scout was almost dry. He sat down and ate a hearty meal, and kept the family in good humor by narrating many amusing incidents in his career.

"You have been to New York, haven't you, Mr. Caruthers?" Jane Reynolds, the sweetheart of Captain Blathers, asked.

"Yes, to get some ribbons which I could not get elsewhere," he replied.

"How did you get across the lines?"

"Walked across."

"Didn't the soldiers challenge you?"

"No. They all know me, I believe."

"Captain Blathers was here day before yesterday," said Bettie, "and he said he met you at a spring three miles this side of Kingsbridge."

"Yes, I did meet him there," said the old scout, dryly, "and also met him the same night in Kingsbridge. He had been out on a raid in this direction somewhere."

"Raid! He raided the Reynolds farm, and made love to——"

"Mother, will you stop her mouth?" angrily exclaimed Jane, her eyes flashing fire.

"Oh, he came here, did he?" Mose asked, smiling.

"Well, now, I kinder reckoned he would stop here."

"You did, eh?" Jane asked, her cheeks mantling. "Pray what reason had you to suspect anything of the kind?"

"Well, I sold him a brass chain and pencil, which I thought he wanted to give to some young girl who preferred her country's enemies to her defenders, and——"

"Why, goodness gracious," screamed Bettie, "he gave that very chain to sister Jane!"

Stuttering Mose pretended to be perfectly horrified at the announcement, and Jane sprang up from the table and rushed out of the kitchen.

"Bettie," said her mother, reproachfully, "you have offended your sister. You ought to know enough to hold your tongue."

"And you ought to know enough to shield your daughter from such a scheming villain as that redcoat Blathers, Mrs. Reynolds," said the old scout, giving the mother a warning look.

"If he is a man of character, and able to support a wife, why should she not marry him, Mose Caruthers?" she indignantly asked.

"Because he already has a wife in England," was the calm reply.

The mother looked utterly dumfounded. She had not dreamed of such a possibility.

"My Lord!" gasped Bettie, springing up and running out of the room.

"It's the God's truth, ma'am," said the old scout, as solemnly as he knew how, facing the old lady.

"Mose Caruthers," cried Jane Reynolds, bursting like a fury into the kitchen, and confronting him, "you are a cowardly slanderer! You cannot even stand in the presence of Captain Blathers, and yet you slander him behind his back. You know very well that he is not married."

"Indeed, Miss Jane," said he, coolly, "how do you know he is not married?"

"He told me so," she replied, triumphantly.

"Did he? Well, that's strange. I saw him exhibit pictures of his wife and child to his brother officers, and heard him speak of 'my wife' several times; I may be mistaken, though, for British officers who are trying to crush us under the iron heel of King George cannot lie."

She grew ashen pale at this, and for a time seemed unable to say anything. But her blind love for the handsome Briton triumphed, and she retorted:

"You know you are slandering him. He is not married. You dare not meet him face to face and charge him as you do behind his back."

"Well, I met him face to face last night and through a window. You couldn't hire him to meet me alone. Think, Miss Jane, do you suppose he would leave the high-born dames of old England to come to America to choose a farmer's daughter for a wife?"

"Why should he not if he loved the farmer's daughter?" she asked.

"Don't deceive yourself. You have read of such things and ought to know better. He told you that chain was gold, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, you see if he would deceive you in one thing he would in another. Bring me that chain and I will show you how worthless it is."

She left the room to get the chain and pencil, the gift of the handsome Captain Blathers, and he opened his pack to get at other jewelry which he had in there. He took up a brass chain of the same pattern as the one he had sold to the captain, and deftly exchanged it for the real gold one when she brought it to him.

He then applied the acid test to the chain.

"There," he said, showing her the spurious chain, "you can see for yourself that he has lied to you."

"Maybe he was deceived himself," she said, ready to excuse him.

"Maybe he was," answered Mose; "but a man of the world like Captain Blathers knows he can't buy a gold chain like this for the sum of three pounds."

"Is that all he paid for it?" Bettie asked.

"Yes—no; he paid me one pound and gave me his due bill for two pounds," and producing the due bill the captain had given him at the time he sold him the chain, he handed it to her with the remark: "Perhaps you may know the handwriting of the gay deceiver."

Jane Reynolds could not deny the handwriting of the faithless lover, for it was well known to her. She grew ashen hued in the face, threw the chain on the floor and retired from the presence of the old scout, a sadder and wiser woman, though as miserable a one as ever the sun shone on.

Mrs. Reynolds sat like one dumfounded. She knew not what to say. Her hopes of a rich and brilliant match for her handsome daughter were now rudely dispelled.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Reynolds," said the old scout, tenderly, "but I could not bear to see your daughter sacrificed to a villain."

"Yes—yes; you are a true friend, Mose Caruthers," said the widow. "I am glad you did it, for the poor child's sake. It will go hard with her, poor thing."

"Scald him with hot water if he comes here again. He deserves it."

"Just let him put his foot in my house again if he dares," and the widow's eyes flashed an ominous light that boded ill to the valiant captain of dragoons.

CHAPTER XI.

TURNING THE TABLES.

HAVING arranged to make it hot for the British captain on his next visit to pretty Jane Reynolds, the old scout

gathered up his pack, after making the widow a nice present for his entertainment, and left the house.

"Ha-he-he!" he chuckled, as he left the yard. "I guess that rascally captain will wish he had never heard of Stuttering Mose. He will think it would have been more profitable to have paid me that balance of two pounds instead of trying to seize my whole stock. He means to deceive that poor girl if he can. I'll give her the chain back when the match is broken off."

He lost no time in pushing eastward toward General Putnam's headquarters. The rain had ceased, and the genial sunshine made earth and forest revel in its soft summer light. He was a splendid pedestrian and made good time during the day, reaching patriot headquarters by sunset.

He immediately reported to General Putnam, and such was the importance of his information, that the old general sent off the greater portion of his command before daylight the next morning, to guard a certain exposed point.

The movement was just in the nick of time, as the British had landed for the purpose of surprising the place, but were astonished at finding the patriots re-inforced and ready to receive them.

"Perdition!" exclaimed the British commander, "New York is a nest of traitors. These rebels have been posted in regard to this movement, and we will have to give up attacking it. But the traitors must be searched out and punished."

The enemy re-embarked for another point, and old General Putnam thanked the old scout for the signal service he had done in giving him the information that enabled him to foil the plans of the enemy.

"I want you to go back near Kingsbridge," he said, "and watch their movements. You need not cross the line unless you think something is going on that I ought to know about. You can take a dozen men with you and keep well in the woods."

The old scout lost no time in selecting his men. They were men whom he knew he could trust, and who knew him and his ways.

They marched nearly all night, and encamped in the woods below the Reynolds place just before daylight.

"Now, boys, keep quiet here till I go up to the house," said Stuttering Mose to his men after sunrise. "There's a saucy young miss up there who gives me many points every time I pass this way. There are few better patriots than Bettie Reynolds, if she is a rattle-brain saucy minx."

They promised not to make their presence known in the vicinity, and he went up at once to the house.

As usual Bettie was the first one to see and greet him.

"Oh, Mr. Caruthers!" she cried, running forward to grasp his hand. "You had better get away from here as fast as ever you can!"

"Why should I run away, child?" he asked, just as Mrs. Reynold's came out to meet him.

"Oh, Captain Blathers has been here, and told an awful lot of stories about you, and made sister Jane believe you are the worst man in the world. He says he will catch and hang you as soon as he gets sight of you again, and he is coming back again this morning."

"Is he, indeed?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Reynolds, "and I would be glad if you would not come here any more, Mose Carruthers. You have given me trouble enough with your cunning lies about Captain Blathers."

"Ah! The handsome captain has blinded the mother as well as the daughter. Bettie, child, you will remain true to your country?"

"Yes, if I die for it—down with King George!" cried the obstreperous little witch of a rebel.

"Come into the house, Bettie Reynolds," said the mother, sternly.

"Mrs. Reynolds," said the old scout, "you are throwing

off a friend who has known you all your life, for one you do not know, and who is an enemy of your country. You will repent in sorrow when it is too late——"

"We don't want any preaching from such as you, Mose Caruthers!" cried Jane Reynolds from an upper window.

"Come into the house, Bettie Reynolds!" commanded Mrs. Reynolds, more sternly than ever.

"Go in, Bettie—you will see things change soon," said Stuttering Mose, shaking hands with the patriotic little witch.

"And you had better leave, too, if you don't want to be hanged," said Mrs. Reynolds, "for Captain Blathers is very angry."

"Is he, indeed? I would like so much to meet him and sell him some more brass jewelry for his lady love."

That was too much. She slammed the door to and locked it, and Stuttering Mose turned on his heels, and went back to his comrades in the woods.

"Boys," he said, "we will wait here and pick up a few redcoats who will be along after awhile. A British captain is in love with a daughter of the widow up there, and will come to see her this morning sometime. She says he has sworn to hang me if he can catch me. I will let him catch me, and then, if he tries to hang me, shoot down his men and then we'll hang him."

"That would be fun enough," said the men, laughing.

They waited quietly in the woods till they heard the gallant captain ride up with ten of his dragoons, and dismount. The captain went in to make love to Jane who received him at the door with open arms and a kiss, while his men did guard duty outside under command of Sergeant Renwicke.

When he had been inside nearly an hour, Stuttering Mose walked leisurely up toward the house with his pack on his back. The sergeant was the first to see him.

"How are you, you stuttering devil?" he cried, seizing him by the collar.

"How a-a-a-are y-y-y-you, s-s-sergeant?" he answered.

"Never better in my life or more glad to see you," replied the sergeant. "Corporal, tell the captain we have a prisoner here."

"A-p-p-p-prisoner!" gasped the stuttering scout.

"Yes—a prisoner who will swing high, I'm thinking."

Captain Blathers and the whole Reynolds family came out to see who the prisoner was.

"Ah! the very man I want!" cried the captain, running forward and aiming a blow with his clenched fist at the face of the prisoner. He did not strike him, however, for the prisoner's foot flew up and struck him a blow on the stomach that doubled him up like a jack-knife, and sent him rolling in the dust before the eyes of his sweetheart.

"Oh, captain!" screamed Jane, rushing to his side, "are you hurt?"

Sick almost unto death, the valiant captain was lifted to his feet.

"Sergeant," he gasped, "hang him to that limb there!"

"Yes, sir, with the greatest pleasure," said the sergeant, setting about getting a halter from one of the dragoons.

"You shall not do such a thing, Captain Blathers!" cried Bettie Reynolds, darting to the side of the old scout.

"Hang him up, sergeant—put the girl out of the way," sternly ordered the Briton.

"T-t-t-this ain't r-r-r-right, captain," stuttered Mose.

"Oh, no, of course not," sneered the captain. "You may as well stop your stuttering, for we understand all about that game."

"Don't hang him, captain," pleaded Mrs. Reynolds.

"Madame, he is a traitor, a robber and a spy. I have sworn to hang him, and he must swing," he replied.

Jane looked on, and said nothing.

She had grown to hate the old scout, and so loved the captain that she would not say a word to move him.

"Here; come this way and stutter some for us," said the

fiendish sergeant, as he dragged him under the tree on which they proposed to laugh at him.

"B-b-b-better n-n-n-not try it," he said, warningly to the sergeant.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed the sergeant. "What's your game now, eh?"

The sergeant threw the halter over the limb, fastening one end around the scout's neck. The three women ran into the house and shut the door.

"Up with him!" shouted the captain. And the sergeant commenced to pull on the halter.

"Bang—bang—bang!" went ten rifles, and eight of the dragoons fell to the earth dead men, leaving the captain, sergeant, and his orderly standing unharmed.

"D-d-d-didn't I t-t-t-tell you n-n-n-not to t-t-t-try it?" exclaimed Stuttering Mose with a chuckle, as the twelve patriots rushed out of the woods and surrounded them.

It was done so quickly that the captain was hardly able to realize that he was not dreaming instead of being a prisoner in the hands of the old scout.

Mose commenced stuttering and laughing, and kept it up till the doors of the house opened and the three women rushed out.

CHAPTER XII.

A TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION.

THE sudden fire of rifles caused the inmates of the house to suspect that new actors had come upon the scene, hence their sudden rush a moment later.

To their supreme astonishment, they found only three Britons on their feet, and they were prisoners—the captain, his orderly, and the sergeant.

Stuttering Mose was dancing around like a maniac, with a long halter about his neck. Captain Blathers was the most astonished man in America at that moment.

"Oh, captain, are you hurt?" cried Jane Reynolds, rushing forward and throwing her arms around his neck.

"Oh, no, he isn't hurt," said Stuttering Mose, with not a stutter in his voice. "Hug him good, Janey, for he may be hurt when he swaps places with me."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the captain.

"I mean that you shall take my place and furnish the amusement for this occasion," replied Mose, suddenly halting before the couple.

"You—are—a spy!" gasped the captain, "I am not."

"Still you were not going to hang me as a spy, were you?" and the old scout grinned in his face with unpitying levity. "You owe me two pounds on that chain. Here's your due bill. Can you pay it now?" and the old scout presented the due bill the captain had given him.

"Yes, I can pay it now," replied the trembling wretch, drawing the money from his pocket and handing it to the old scout.

"Here's your due bill; you tried to go back on it, didn't you?"

The captain made no response.

"Now look here, you gay deceiver," said the old scout, "you are a married man, ain't you?"

"No," was the bold reply.

"There," exclaimed Jane, "are you satisfied now, you wretch!" and she leaned her head lovingly against the captain's breast.

"Oh, yes; I am satisfied that he is a liar and you a fool, Jane Reynolds," said the old scout, taking the halter from his own neck and placing it on that of the captain.

That worthy sprang aside and asked:

"What do you mean, sir?"

"What did you order it around my neck for?" Mose asked.

He was silent.

"It will fit your neck as well as mine. Circumstances have altered cases before this. Hold still now."

But the captain would not hold still, and Mose dealt him a blow that sent him to grass.

Jane Reynolds screamed and darted forward to his side.

"Get out of the way, Jane," commanded Mose, and in another minute he had the halter around his neck and his arms pinioned.

By this time the prisoner recovered and scrambled hard to get upon his feet. Mose assisted him.

"It's a mighty poor rule that won't work both ways, isn't it, old Blatherskite?" said Mose, throwing the other end of the halter over the limb of the tree.

"Mose Caruthers," said Mrs. Reynolds, who knew something about the nerve of the old scout, "are you going to murder your prisoners?"

"Mrs. Reynolds," he said, "ten minutes ago I was his prisoner. You heard him order the sergeant to swing me up. Is it any worse for me than for him?"

"But it is not right for either of you to do that way."

"Maybe not, but if I don't make him take his own medicine it will be because he plays me the same trick I played him."

"Mercy—mercy!" gasped Jane Reynolds, kneeling at his feet.

"Get up and get into the house, Jane Reynolds!" said he, sternly; "when the halter was around my neck you spoke not a word for mercy for me. You are not one whose cry I would listen to. Out of my way! Captain Blathers, your time has come. Now tell the truth. Are you not a married man?"

The captain was silent.

"Well, you can leave any message you please, and it will be delivered. You have just five minutes more to live."

"Will you not take a ransom?" the prisoner asked.

"No—your master's kingdom could not save you. You ordered me to swing. You swing in my stead. Right, isn't it, eh?"

The captain then took a pencil and paper from his pocket after his arms were unbound, and wrote a few lines, tore the leaf out and handed it to his orderly, saying:

"Give it to her when you see her."

Mose promptly seized the orderly and took it from him. He glanced at it a moment and saw that it was a last message to his wife and child.

"This is for you, Janey," he said, tossing it contemptuously at her feet.

She picked it up and read it; gave a piercing scream, and fainted.

"Up you go, you villanous wretch!" cried Mose, and the next moment the captain was dangling in the air.

Mrs. Reynolds and Bettie were trying to revive Jane. Two of the patriots took her up and bore her into the house, where they left her in charge of her mother and sister.

In fifteen minutes the captain was dead, and Mose let him drop to the ground.

"How was that, sergeant?" he asked, turning to Sergeant Renwicke. "Well done, wasn't it?"

"Yes; you never do anything any other way than well. You are the best stutterer I ever heard—play it well—and the best scout and spy in the rebel service."

"Yet you called me a stuttering idiot, and wanted to hang me."

"Well, you played the stuttering idiot so well, one couldn't call you anything else. As to hanging you, I had to obey orders from my captain, you know."

"But it really seemed a great pleasure to you to obey that order."

"You know I didn't love you," said the sergeant, who was desperate in his endeavors to talk the old scout out of the notion of hanging him. "You ducked me in the spring and threw me on my head."

"But did you get any more than you deserved?"

"No, I suppose not."

"That's talking like a man. I honor you, sergeant. I would have died like a man, scorning to beg for my life.

Luck is against you; tell the captain when you meet him on the other side of Jordan that you are ashamed of him."

"But you——"

"That'll do, sergeant. Don't say anything that'll make me think any less of you. I admire a brave man under all——"

"Oh, look here, my friend, what are you going to hang me for?" the sergeant asked, trembling from head to foot.

"Whenever a man tries to hang me and fails through no fault of his, I am just the man to return the compliment. Don't think me lacking in courtesy, sergeant."

"My God!" groaned the doomed man, as the other end of the halter was thrown over the limb on which Captain Blathers was swung into eternity.

"You can have five minutes for prayers, sergeant," said Mose. "You were not so generous to me, you know."

"Mercy—mercy!" pleaded the wretch, completely breaking down.

"Why, hang it, sergeant, I thought you were clear grit!" exclaimed the old scout, disgusted. "Swing him up, men."

"Up he goes!" cried half a dozen men, seizing the halter and pulling on it with all their might. The heavy body of the sergeant ran up several feet from the ground. He died hard, struggling desperately for several minutes, but he was soon still and motionless in death.

"Let him down, men," said the old scout, "and we'll bury 'em both in one grave. They were a precious pair of rascals, and will sleep well together. I guess we may as well make a clean thing of it by swinging up this other one, and then we won't be troubled with a prisoner."

The orderly did not expect to be spared after what he had witnessed. He saw there was no mercy in those stern old patriots who had suffered so much at the hands of the redcoats, and resolved, therefore, to ask for none.

The halter was placed around his neck, and he was led under the fatal tree.

Just then Bettie burst out of the house, and rushed up to Mose's side.

"Now, stop this, Mose Caruthers," she cried. "You know I have been true to our cause all along, and given you good proof of it. I have the right to ask for the life of this poor fellow."

"You shall have it, Bettie," said Mose, after a pause.

The orderly was a handsome young man, whose education seemed to be above his surroundings. He turned to Bettie and said:

"I owe you my life, miss. Words cannot express my gratitude. I will try to make my actions speak for me."

Bettie was touched.

"You don't know how glad you make me feel," she said, her eyes filling with tears again.

"You shall be paroled," said the old scout. "I'll take you to General Putnam myself, and see to it."

Entering the house, Mose found Jane Reynolds pale and sick in bed, she was utterly overwhelmed. Mrs. Reynolds was by her side.

"You are now safe, Jane," he said; "you would not believe me, and would have been made the dupe of that villain, so I hung him. It is punishment enough for you, so I will say no more. I bid you good-by," and with that he stalked out of the house.

He ordered the soldiers to be buried in one common grave in the woods below the house, and then he stole silently away with his men in the night.

The next day, however, found him on the way back to Stamford with the prisoner.

He frankly stated to the old general what he had done with Captain Blathers and Sergeant Renwicke. To his surprise, the old general was furiously mad, and threatened to court-martial him.

"If our enemies choose to act like barbarians," he said, "does it warrant you in doing likewise?"

"General," said the old scout, "I am not in the service

—have never been mustered into the Continental army. But you know something of my service to my country. If a British officer tries to hang me, and I turn the tables on him and hang him, and you punish me for it, I'll raise the country on you, and hang the whole court."

General Putnam burst into a roar of laughter, in which he was joined by his staff.

"You may go this time," he said, "but don't you do any more hanging. I will see to that myself."

He then then paroled the young orderly, and gave him permission to live in Connecticut as long as the patriots held possession of it. The young man signed the parole, and then left, going back to the house of the Widow Reynolds.

"I have come back," he said, "to work on your farm till the war ends, only asking food and shelter. Will you accept my services?"

"Yes," said the widow, promptly.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE young Briton was put to work on the farm, and became one of the household of the Widow Reynolds. He was a quiet, steady young man, who did his work conscientiously, but lost no opportunity to show his gratitude to Bettie for having saved his life.

In the meantime Stuttering Mose went back to his men near Kingsbridge, and kept up a watch on the enemy, reporting to General Putnam.

But the indignant redcoats made strenuous efforts to capture him. They sent out a half dozen parties at one time, to scour the woods in search of him. One party came suddenly upon him, but were only too glad to get away with half their number.

They went back and reported that he had a whole army at his back in the woods, and still stronger forces were sent out in search of him.

But such an experienced woodsman as Stuttering Mose was not to be caught napping.

At last they determined to clean out the neutral ground, so greatly had he annoyed them.

"Now, men," he said, "move back out of the way, and I'll see what they are up to."

The patriots moved back beyond the neutral ground, and old Mose disappeared in the woods again.

This time he was disguised as a plain farmer. He pretended to live up in Westchester and be in search of a horse that had been stolen from him. By this means he went about unmolested, crossed the lines and entered Kingsbridge, where he strolled about at leisure. Going down into New York City, he stopped at Benny Burke's place again, and inquired about the two soldiers whom he left asleep at a table in the tap-room.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed the jolly landlord; "they looked sheepish when they woke up and found you gone."

Mose laughed, too; but he kept very quiet, for at that moment two British officers came in and called for a bottle of wine.

"The commander of Kingsbridge and Major Hammersley," whispered the landlord, as he proceeded to wait on the two officers.

Mose watched them furtively for a while, saw that they were very fond of wine, and concluded to wait and see if they would drink to excess.

Turning to the commandant at Kingsbridge, he whispered in his ear:

"If you will come into another room with me I will tell you something about that Stuttering Mose. I think he is now in the city, and I want to make sure of that reward."

The officer sprang to his feet and called for a private room.

Benny Burke was astonished, but he knew the old pa-

triot could take care of himself, so he led the way up stairs, candle in hand.

When in the room with his victim, Stuttering Mose locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

Turning to the officer, he said:

"Look at me!"

He looked at him.

"D-d-d-do you k-k-know me?" Mose stuttered, a broad grin on his face.

"Great God!" gasped the officer, "are you Mose Caruthers?"

"Y-y-y-yes, I'm the s-s-s-stuttering idiot," and he drew a pistol, leveled it at his breast, adding:

"Move, or utter a word, and you are a dead Briton. I am not going to get your head this time, but you will have to pay me a shilling as ransom."

"A shilling!"

"Yes; some people would ask more, but I am satisfied with a reasonable sum. I offered two pence for your head; now that I have got it I will let you go for a shilling, only keeping a lock of your hair to remember you by."

The officer seemed on the point of resisting.

"You know I am one to do a bad thing," said Mose, warningly. "Just make an attempt to give me trouble, and you'll be the dearest man in the world. Do as I say, and you can walk down stairs again unharmed."

The officer paid down the shilling, and then Mose made him sit down in a chair while he cut a big lock of hair from his head, which completely spoiled his remaining locks.

"Now you may go down stairs," he said, unlocking the door, "and tell Major Hammersley all about it. Of course you may hang me when you catch me, and I won't say a word about it."

Of course he went down stairs and raised the alarm. Several more soldiers had come in, and they all rushed up stairs to the room to capture the bold rebel.

But the bird had flown. The window that looked out on a shed was open, and the way of his exit was discovered.

The night being so dark and stormy pursuit was worse than useless.

Orders to double the guards all along the line were issued, but it did no good. The old scout got away with the lock of hair, and rejoined his companions beyond the neutral ground.

The next day he issued a proclamation, and told the story of how he had captured the commandant and forced him to ransom himself with a shilling, after surrendering a lock of his hair.

The whole country was soon laughing at the joke. Sir Henry Clinton investigated the affair, and finding that Mose had told the truth, removed the commandant, sent him on an expedition south, and appointed another man in his place.

During the entire war Stuttering Mose worked for the patriot cause, sometimes at the urgent request of General Washington himself, who offered him a commission if he would join the army. But he declined, saying he would do more if allowed to be free from officers over him, and he did. The British were so much annoyed by him that frequent attempts to capture him were made. At one time they were nearly successful, but he got away at last.

At the end of the war he went back to his farm, and settled down to hard work and peddling again.

Bettie Reynolds grew up to be a splendid-looking woman, and, after peace was declared, married the man whose life she had saved. He made a good husband, got rich, and never ceased to believe his wife the best woman that ever lived. Like her, he remained all his life the staunch friend of STUTTERING MOSE, the old scout of the revolution.

[THE END.]